Northwick Lodge
Harrow on Hill Middlesex

Monday, 21st Oct 1963.

Dearest René

Thanks for yr letter and the photograph of yourself shelving the books. Glad the trip to Kerry was alright. Yes, I can well believe Killarney is a bit too much. famous 'beauty spots' are nearly always either that – if not in exactly the same way.

Yes, I wholly agree about Bottie S. We shall just have to wait & see what he makes of his Vita Erici. His ~~[illegible]~~ industriousness is incredible. I remember seeing at Douglas C's a large vol. of transcripts of letters & what not, made in connection with his biography of old Bill Rothenstein, the sheer dogged labour was quite ~~[illegible]~~ alarming. ~~Douglas had it~~ He had lent it to Douglas for some purpose, I forget what. It's a strange business this writing of biographies. Only occasionally I imagine do they really 'get' the chap.

The MS Denis sent me was not a typescript but a fully written out thing of the entire work with not many corrections. I have here somewhere two 'Lock' hat-boxes full of MS of I.P. & also ~~[illegible]~~ typescripts & printed ~~proofs~~ galley proofs. I don't know how it chanced to be with his stuff. I imagine by some ~~[illegible]~~ accident & that they found it when unpacking some case. He wrote only a short note saying he'd found it. I wrote him a longish letter thanking him & talked about this & that. I've not heard since – not that there was any need for a reply & I dont expect D or Petra are much give to writing letters unless it is absolutely necessary.

I read with interest the thing in the Tablet about the Chanson de Roland. It's interesting all that semantic thing – and becoming more & more seen as of the greatest importance in the understanding of past works. One begins to wonder

I'll thank you, Captain Harvey, to keep in your proper station which is astern of the Victory

There's a good example of the vowel change mentioned earlier in this letter. Even when I was young 'astern' was pronounced as-tarn I remember Mick R. being mildly irritated with his father for pronouncing it 'as-tarn', thinking of it as a kind of bogus nautical pronunciation, whereas actually it was the common pronunciation until quite recently, anyway till a few decades back.

you know, rather as cun-dit for conduit has now totally gone and or-fice for office. Though I noticed, the Queen Mother, in speaking on the radio the other day spoke of the 'or-ficers & men of the Desert Army'.

(2)

*
1950.
~~[illegible]~~ ~~exact~~

how chaps translated or interpreted *anything* before it's importance was understood. Saw an interesting example ~~some years~~* back when in some medieval latin document to do with works, at Caernarvon castle in 1283 the words '*nova mota*' occur & this had always been thought to mean a 'new *motte*' — you know, Eng for the mound of earth on which the keep of Norman castles stood. Well, it seemed a bit odd because though there had been earlier types of castles at Caernarvon it seemed ~~[illegible]~~ impossible that a new *motte* should be erected in 1283, when the whole plan of castle-building was radically changed. About ten years later, 1294-5 a Welsh rising stormed the place and afterwards the present castle was erected or re-erected and at the same time a brand new one erected at Beaumaris on the *Anglesey* shore of the Menai Strait where there had *never* previously been a castle of any sort and the first item in the account-books deals with wages paid to workmen ~~[illegible]~~ and the words *fossata et motam* occur, and chaps observing this said, well, we know there never was a *motte* at Beaumaris so *motam* clearly must here mean 'moat' and the *nova mota* at Caernarvon ten years before must also mean 'new moat' & not 'new motte.' Well, pretty boring, I'm afraid, but has a bearing on how a bit of detective work on what a word could pass as meaning at one date was ruled out by its use ten years later of a site where there was no possibility of its bearing that meaning.

I liked your bit also at the end of your review in *Tablet*, about the Sermon on the Mount. Incredibly naive chaps are. You'd think a few moments reflection would prevent them from venturing on those sorts of comparison. It would be legitimate enough in a work examining the dichotomies and contradictions ~~[illegible]~~ of chaps of whatever beliefs at all times — a damned interesting & ~~elusive~~ very elusive matter, but irritating & silly when just casually thrown into a work of that sort. But chaps can *hardly ever* resist it. Perhaps it's something very deep — an inward sense of contradiction that has to be voiced in some way. I find myself doing it sometimes. ~~I remember said years back~~

In the same account-books about Caernarvon etc.
there are some very interesting items giving in detail
the sums paid out to all kinds of workers, masons,
carpenters, glaziers etc & payments for conveyance of
material by waggon etc. but mainly by sea from
Liverpool, also Chester, & places held by the English
such as Conway & Rhuddlan. But Liverpool
especially. ~~Twenty ships~~ The masters of twenty
ships with timber etc. from Liverpool had to be
paid. I suppose it was easier to bring heavy
freights by sea & also they would be safe from
sudden attacks by the Welsh whereas ~~by~~ by
road this would be still a danger even
after the Conquest of 1282. One item amuses
me, payment made to a tailor for
hire of horses to bring new clothes for
Queen Eleanor & Edward I for the Easter
Celebrations in the new buildings at
Caernarvon in 1284. And payment to a
special glazier from Chester to fix windows
in the ~~Queen's~~ royal apartments.

Oct 22nd ~~Later~~ Found the ref. to this stuff, it was from a
back copy of a the journal of *The Historical Association.*
Easter Day was on April 9th that year (1284)
on April 25th Edward of Carnarvon the founder of
Your college at Oxford was born, and it says
that on the Tuesday in Easter week
"alms were distributed to thirteen poor persons by
the queen's chaplain *pro Regina pregnante, precepto
Regis.*" I've been reminded of all this because
someone the other day sent me a cutting from *The Daily
Telegraph* reviewing a new book called
The History of the Kings Works 2 vols, £12-12-0.
terrible price these books are nowadays. But
it gives the equivalent in modern cash of
the sums in the medieval account-books, which is
useful to know. Apparently you have to multiply
by a 100 each sum, which means that Edward I
spent *ten million quid* in our money on *castles in Wales*
alone — about £100,000 in 13th Cent money. One
tends to forget that every damn thing has to
be paid for just as now, and helps one to
see that though ~~military~~ as now overwhelming military
power decided the issue, you couldn't, any
more than now, have that military power without
bags of cash. I think the popular view has
tended to suppose that once (to stick to the case
of Wales) the King of England or great barons had

~~when~~ beaten the Welsh warrior-~~agriculturalists~~ pastoralists in any given area all they had to do was to round up the local chaps &, under armed supervision, compel them to build these great castles, which is really like supposing that a few technicians from the London Sch. of Technology (if there is such a place) with a few soldiers with automatic weapons could go to Dorset or Cumberland, round up the local farmers and compel them to build some complicated power-station. What was required was the assembling of highly skilled masons * & technicians of various sorts — together with much of the material required & transport the chaps & the material by sea or land to the site, and as every bit of this had to be paid for at fixed rates it ~~[illegible]~~ would obviously come to a pretty steep figure, all told. No doubt they could & did ~~[illegible]~~ employ forced labour for the ~~[illegible]~~ welsh inhabitants, especially, I imagine, for the rougher work, but even this would have to be paid for in some way, because if they were serfs the lord to whose land they belonged would demand their return, after a fixed period, to work his lands. Then there were the troops necessary to guard the workmen & the work as it proceeded. Feudal ~~[illegible]~~ lords were compelled to provide a certain number of troops to the King in war-time, but the duration of service was fixed to so many months & no more. That's why Ed. employed so many Gascon & other mercenaries in Wales, for, so long as they received their wages, they were available all the year round, but that again meant still more cash.

I've just looked at the note made for the 1950 article mentioned above and see that the special glazier from Chester sent to Caernarfon in 1284 in preparation for the Queen's coming there was paid what I take to be six shillings & eightpence for the job (the latin reads: ~~[illegible]~~ fenestrarum de vitro in Camera Regis et Regin~~a~~e apud Caernaruan, vj. s. viij. d.) I suppose the 'vj' means VI. I've never understood their use of 'j' for 'i' in numerals, — yes, of course, they always used it ~~[illegible]~~ if it was the final ~~[illegible]~~ numeral. That means that David de Wautham the Chester glazier was paid 6/-8d multiplied by 100 in our money — what would that be? about £33? in 1950? — ~~[illegible]~~ but the £1. has lost in value since then, so wages up, so I suppose the chap would have to be paid about £50 at our present 1963 rates.

* True, by that time, the Welsh princes themselves had built castles & abbeys & there must have been available a good number of Welshmen ~~[illegible]~~ able to construct in the current fashion — carpenters & masons etc, ~~[illegible]~~ must have been about the place. All the daughters of Llywelyn the Great were married to Norman marcher Lords & he himself to ~~the~~ daughter of King John & Llywelyn the Last was married to Simon de Montfort's daughter, so that actually the standard of living between the important Welsh leaders & the barons was not, by then, much different. But it's easy to see that ~~[illegible]~~ after the Conquest, it was safer to employ only English craftsmen & Englishmen in every capacity to do with both works & office. ~~[illegible]~~. There's an amusing ref. somewhere about, I think, a Welshman being appointed to some small office ~~[illegible]~~ or other, and an English magnate of somesort writing to Edward, says "my lord, it is said that Welshmen are, after all, Welshmen." I've forgotten the occasion; it may have been something more general, but the phrase amused me.

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Not an awful lot but it would depend on how many bloody windows the camera Regis et Regine had. It says ~~[illegible]~~ of the tailor mentioned earlier that: "On 28th April payment of 20 shillings was made to Robin the tailor for hire of two horses ad car' robas Regis et Regine de London usque Caernarvon pro festo Pasche." (April 9th), That sounds too much multiplied by 100 for just ~~[illegible]~~ bringing these clothes to Caernarvon.

I liked the remarks of the fisherman Tommy Shiney. But I don't like ~~the~~ the sound of those wandering beggar-men — you couldn't get an Irish ~~[illegible]~~ wolf-hound? — they ain't black but whitish (fawn) colour & the most beautiful dogs in the world.* In reading yr letter I've been looking at the map of Ireland & it's awful how ignorant one is of where places are even in lands one reckons one has read a good deal about. For example I've always imagined Loch Derg to be in Connaught & in the south of it moreover, but see it is in Ulster, — not the political 'Northern Ireland', but Ulster in the proper ancient sense. It's rather like supposing Tunbridge Wells was somewhere near Chester! Such vagueness on my part makes me inclined to believe what the American who for a while ran that lodging-house I lived in in Kensington told me of a G.I. in the 1st World War, called up from the Deep South who said "Well, they reckon we've gotta fight for a god-damned State called France, away north, never heard of it."

*As a matter of fact I don't think many exist now — only a few — specially kept.

No, nothing further about the ~~[illegible]~~ taxation thing. You know I lost my appeal, ~~[illegible]~~ and had to pay the extra amount they had assessed. Then there ~~was~~ was an appeal lodged against the judgment of the court of appeal, but heard no news of that as yet, nor of what was being done about the affair in general, but my view is ~~that~~ nothing can be done. Think of the London Library, everybody from Churchill to Tom Eliot tried to save ~~that~~ it from taxation but without success.

Helen S. came out to see me the other day — she was so pleased that Joan & you are so happy in your new home. She's mentally just as vigorous as ever, but terribly lame and can walk only with a stick. She was here only a very short time about 3/4 of an hour because she ~~was~~ came in a car and was going to Nikky's to dinner and still retains this exactitude as to times of appointment.

I see our new Prime Minister is married to

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a sister of a girl called Livinia Alington whom I knew, very slightly away back in the 1930s — perhaps by way of Nicolete G. — can't recall, but she was a ~~real~~ crasher — a sort of Diana Nemorensis, tall & white-skinned & red-gold tresses, I think she ~~was~~ married a Don of some sort.

Thursday Oct 24th.

How strange, I got your P.C. of Reginalds tower in Waterford. & your letter, which was written on ~~Trafalgar~~ Trafalgar Day — the day I started this one to you. I was surprised that this year the anniversary was not mentioned on the Radio or in The Times — the first time I can ever remember them not doing that. How that event still holds the mind — I very often re-read a reprint I have of The Times for Nov 7th 1805 with Collingwood's despatch to the Admiralty dated: 'Off Cape Trafalgar, Oct 22'. He says in it "The conflict was severe: the enemy's ships were fought with a gallantry highly honourable to their Officers" — that's a different spirit from Nelson's report to Lord St Vincent on the Battle of the Nile, he spoke of "the judgement of the Captains, the valour of the officers" and men of every description". Nelson was no doubt as strict a disciplinarian as any, but he had a real feeling for the common seamen I'm sure of that. It is said there was no flogging in the Victory, which, if true, is amazing, considering the awful amount that went on aboard most ships.

Yesterday a son of Antony Foster (alias Roly) came to see me. He was a nice young man, he said he'd been (or was still perhaps) at the Wycombe Art Sch. but had failed in some boring exam. — I don't know what. In my day it was only people who wanted to teach who went in for exams, but perhaps it's all changed. He seemed to want my advice, but I couldn't tell about quite what. He said sometimes he wanted to be a sculptor, sometimes a painter, sometimes a letter-cutter, sometimes a writer. Well, that's natural enough, but in the circumstances of the modern world it's so hard to give any useful advice. One feels so antique & separated by a wide gulf from what these young men have to contend with. I felt so useless & unhelpful. He was sorry Pigotts was no more. He had the perception to see that old Laurie was the best letter-cutter. He thought that old bit of oak, my St Dominic, was done by his father! These young men are so patchy in what they know about. Packed with information in one way, but oddly

Talking of Nelson, I have a friend whose father owned various iron foundaries in Middlesborough, and among his many employees there was one Welshman from the Rhondda area & he was badly hurt in some blast-furnace accident. My friend's father (a big Yorkshireman, awfully nice bloke — I met him once) went to the hospital to see this injured Welshman, whose services he greatly valued and asked him how he was feeling, and the Welshman said "Thank you indeed, sir, for coming to see me, I hope it's not a case of "Kiss me 'ardy" but that's what it feels like'. However all was well, he recovered.

unaware in other ways. He wanted to see a few drawings and when looking at the Aphrodite one the Valerie one with the sea-battle outside the casements, he said 'What's the story?', well I said you know ~~Ag~~ Aphrodite & her wound & the sea & the bow of Eros & [illegible] so on. To quote Taplow, "You can't explain everything!" But he's a jolly nice chap, but it is difficult to give advice of any sort. I've felt the same with a number of young men who from time to time have come to see me. One's own life has been lived in so different a world. Makes you feel bloody old. And of course this present-day art-school thing is almost worse, if that were possible, than when I was young. They are shown everything from Lascaux to Raphael to Picasso & beyond ~~and~~ it is bewildering for them — paralysing in a way. — it's pretty paralysing for oneself — ah well, I suppose he'll find his own way somehow. But I did not feel I was any help to him.

There was a very interesting talk about the English Vernacular & its survival after the Norman Conquest on the 3rd Pro. the other day, by Eliz. Salter, [illegible] a [illegible] Cambridge lecturer in English. She read some little bits of O.E. & M.E. texts very beautifully. Anyway it recalled to me that old problem of how Latin was pronounced in England in the Middle Ages. Because you know the defenders of the 'old style' Eng. pronunciation of Latin, in the last century [illegible] said that it came right through from the Middle Ages, because each country pronounced Latin vowels as it ~~pro~~ pronounced the vowels of its own language, True enough, but owing to the 'Great Vowel Shift' in English sometime between Malory & Shakespeare a quite different picture presents itself. I mean Chaucer or Langland must have pronounced (on that showing) Latin vowels much nearer the ~~'preformed'~~ 'reformed' pronunciation — with 'i' = ee, & so on. Langland's "Mede the Maid" was pronounced something more like 'maid they mide' — very like modern Cockney as to 'maid' — or for that matter not very unlike a monoglot Welsh child would say it now, by just looking at the words & trying to pronounce them with only Welsh vowels in mind — for he or she would say something vaguely like, it's difficult — but probably either máy-dāh then māh-ēed I think, or perhaps more méd-deh for ~~a~~ Mede. It would depend on whether the 'e' was thought of as long or short, for a long Welsh 'e' is like the English 'a' in 'made' and the short Welsh 'e' is like the English 'e' in 'fell', and the Welsh 'i' when long is like the 'ee' in English 'seed' & when short like the English i in 'pig'. In fact I suppose it could be said that in the Middle Ages some of the vowel-sounds of English & Welsh were a good bit ~~[illegible]~~ closer than they are now.* I told you, didn't I, about that Welsh friend of mine, a man of about sixty, I suppose, who as a child of five on his first day in the village school, saw through a glass ~~[illegible]~~ partition the ~~the~~ top of a blackboard in an adjoining class-room (where an English lesson was in progress) ~~[illegible]~~ the chalked signs

I, i, = 👁. And he said to himself in Welsh, "Well, I thought these teachers were horrible, but I didn't think they would tell little children lies — everybody knows that ~~[illegible]~~ llygad* [eye] has nothing to do with the letter 'i', which is pronounced 'ee'. They do it to get you into trouble, ~~[illegible]~~ perhaps." Jolly touching story, isn't it.

* Mainly because Welsh vowels are in the main like 'Continental' ones & so were the English vowels until this change in the early 16th Cent., or whenever it was.

* Pronounced llúg-gad

I wish I knew more exactly when this 'ere vowel shift occurred in English. In Dunbar, 1465-1520 about, it looks as if Timor Mortis conturbat me rhymed with modern Eng. 'me', e.g. 'infirmitie', 'slee', 'die', 'vanitie'. The last time I asked a chap about the change (that was six years ago) all he would say ~~[illegible]~~ was that it occurred gradually between the end of the 15th Cent & the first half of 16th — & he was fresh from ~~Oxford~~ Cambridge, where he'd been reading English. But perhaps they know more accurately now. They know about every bloody thing these days.

Scots pron. dee

Thursday, Oct 24th (bloody midnight)

Later. The rock of Cashel sounds marvellous. How does Rosalind like her convent school?

~~[illegible]~~ Thanks for further refs to Stella Maris.

Yes, want E.G.R.T's book & articles in ~~[illegible]~~ Journal of Inst. Nav. I told Tom all he wanted to know & there's still this friend of Mick's if he wants more exactitude.

Love Dai.